The Far Side of Leadership: Rather Difficult to Face

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Following the line that Gary Larson's *Far Side* comics took, we present a surrealistic, though serious view of the "far side" of leadership. We highlight the foibles and follies of the leadership influencing process, explaining how distance from the leader can produce effects that might seem particularly irrational though which may have some evolutionary explanations (Van Vugt, 2010, in press). In a way, we present an explanation for the "nice-from-far but far-from-nice" phenomenon.

We put the far side at the core of the leadership legitimization process to explore how *leader distance* affects the leader's ability to influence others. Bogardus (1927) was the first to discuss it and suggested that leaders must be socially distant from followers because "the extent that leadership rests on sheer prestige, it is easily punctured by intimacy" (p. 127). It may seem that we take an "anti-leadership" stance given the punch line of our chapter, which is: Leaders who make it to the top may do so not because of the skills they posses but because they "look the role" and this biasing effect appears to be accentuated with leader distance. How, precisely does leadership work from a distance? If leaders obtain legitimacy merely by maintaining a distance, is leadership--particulary at the upper echelons where leaders are shielded from followers--just about props and smokscreens or does it actually impact the organization?

Although our chapter takes a leader-distance twist, we will also show that leaders actually have an important effect on organizational outcomes. The fact that leaders are selected for reasons other than the competence they possess to do their jobs brings to fore another problem, that of leader selection; however, it certainly does not nullify the fact that leaders can have good and bad effects on organizations. It all depends on how competent and influential the leaders actually are. Put bluntly a dumb, extraverted leader who looks competent will not be as effective as a smart extraverted leader who looks competent.

In this chapter, we begin by first explaining leadership and the leader distance phenomenon. We then review some evidence indicating that in distant situations (i.e., political elections), followers seem to inordinately rely on specious factors when it comes to selecting a leader. Next, we discuss the ascription-actuality theory of leadership (Antonakis, in press), which provides an integrative explanation for these findings, and also to the question of why leadership actually matters. Finally, we review some of the traits which are thought to matter for leadership effectiveness (but might not) and some traits that actually matter for effectiveness. We conclude by presenting an evolutionary explanation as to why, when we select leaders, we may rely on factors which actually do not matter at all.

Distance in Leadership

Leadership can be exercised close-up, impacting followers and teams directly; this is the type of leadership that most leadership scholars, particularly those who come from a psychology background, study. However, leadership can also work from far away, whether cascading through an organization via subordinate leaders or organizational structures, or through influencing distant followers directly (e.g., voters) via the media or other channels (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Antonakis & Hooijberg, 2007; Jacquart & Antonakis, 2010; Shamir, 1995). Insofar as organizational scholarship is concerned, research on the leadership-at-a-distance phenomenon is relatively scarce, and most of the research on leadership has focused on supervisory, or face-to-face leadership (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; J.G. Hunt, 1991; Waldman & Yammarino, 1999). Of course, leadership is required at all levels of organizations (Minkes, Small, & Chatterjee, 1999), yet it is the top-level, "distant" leadership—that is, leadership *of* organizations (J. G. Hunt, 1991)—which might matter most for organizational outcomes (Antonakis, House, Rowold, & Borgmann, 2010). The close-distant continuum is important to address because leader distance determines how leader influence is exercised and the level of analysis at which the impact of

leadership will lie (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; J.G. Hunt, 1991; Waldman & Yammarino, 1999).

At the upper echelons of organizations, leaders determine the strategy and thus influence the outcomes of their organizations (Hambrick & Mason, 1984); be it a large multinational firm or even a whole country, there is evidence to suggest that leadership matters (Bertrand & Schoar, 2003; G. Chen, Kirkman, & Kanfer, 2007; Flynn & Staw, 2004; R. J. House, W. D. Spangler, & J. Woycke, 1991; B. F. Jones & Olken, 2005; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Top-level leaders' influence on organizational outcomes is even greater in situations where managerial discretion is large (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990; Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987); indeed, as job autonomy increases, so too does the impact of personal characteristics on managerial outcomes (Barrick & Mount, 1993).

Leaders also impact organizational outcomes through shaping values and culture. Organizational culture originates, in part, from the founders' values; these values influence the selection process in such a way that employees with beliefs, values, and assumptions congruent to those of the organization will be sought (Schein, 1990). The culture then becomes self-reinforcing (Schneider, 1987). Finally, top level leaders also create culture by setting expected standards of behavior through role modeling (Sashkin, 2004; Schein, 1990). Supported by reward and control systems, the values and culture of the organization channel the leaders' strategic vision across organizational levels, and thus ultimately influences performance both at individual and organizational levels (Antonakis & Hooijberg, 2007; Hooijberg, Hunt, Antonakis, Boal, & Lane, 2007; Waldman & Yammarino, 1999).

Shamir (1995) was the first to provide an integrative perspective of the role of distance in the charismatic leadership process; contributions have been made by others as well (Bogardus, 1927, 1928; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Napier & Ferris, 1993; R. E. Park, 1924; Yagil, 1998).

Although conceptualized in different ways, feeling distant from a leader can be attributed to three types of distances: physical, social, as well as interaction frequency (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002). One of the aspects which characterizes the leadership *of* organizations is a high leader-follower distance on all three dimensions of distance (i.e., "Class 3 leaders," following the Antonakis-Atwater model). Top-level leaders are usually physically distant from most of their followers. Interactions between top-level leaders and followers are often rare or may never occur. Finally, social distance (i.e., status and rank differences) between top-level leaders and followers is usually high too.

One way in which leader-follower distance affects the leadership process is that in high distance situations, followers have very little information about leaders and may be prone to judge them by similarity or representativeness. Tversky and Kahneman (1974) have shown that when making judgments under uncertainty, individuals tend to seek attributes that are thought to be representative of a category; even when just a couple of these attributes are found, the category is triggered (Cantor & Mischel, 1977) and the individual will be classifed according to prototypical indicators of the category. Future judgements regarding the target will remain anchored there even if the observer encounters disconfirming information (cf. Nickerson, 1998).

This information scarcity is akin to what Plato evoked in his allegory of the ship captain in *The Republic*. Plato compared the state to a ship. The governor (captain) of the ship represents the ruler of the state, and the crew its citizens. According to Plato, the crew neither has the knowledge nor the technical expertise to select a competent leader and thus they will choose a captain who may be "taller and stronger than any of the crew, but he is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and his knowledge of navigation is not much better" (Plato & Jowett, 1901). Similarly to the crew of the ship, citizens of a state lack the knowledge and expertise to vote competently and thus rely on specious factors when selecting a leader; consequently states

are bound to be oftentimes ruled by incompetent, but tall and strong leaders. Plato certainly has history on this side on this point (and we leave it up to readers to think of salient examples!).

One wonders to which extent Plato's rather gloomy prediction would be prevalent in modern democracies and organizations. Given the abundance of information which prevails in modern societies, is it reasonable to assume that normal folk--company board members, personnel selectors, followers, or voters--are less biased by irrelevant factors when selecting leaders. Multinational firms pay large sums of money to specialized recruitment firms to ensure that the best executives possible are proposed for a post. We would like to think that those who select leaders do so on the basis of the leaders' competence and influencing skills and not on irrelevant factors like their looks, their sex, or their height.

We would also like to believe that in politics voters pay attention to the issues, the voting history of candidates (and their parties), the values that they are willing to defend, the previous performance of candidates, their constancy and integrity, and so forth. Yet, political candidates and their parties still spend huge sums of money in campaigns to seduce voters, particularly via media outlets like television, and pay particular attention to managing and marketing the image of their candidates. For instance, in early 2008, campaign costs for the 2008 US congress and presidential elections neared US$2 Billion dollars (Oliphant, 2008). Unfortunately, recent research shows that voters, particularly those who are not well informed, are inordinately influenced by candidate image instead of substance as a direct result of television viewing (Lenz & Lawson, 2009). We discuss this phenomenon in detail next, as well as provide a test of Plato's allegory with the boat captain (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009).

Facing leadership from a distance

At this point, we have suggested that distance can affect leadership processes like leader emergence; however, how strong is the evidence? Alexander Todorov and his colleagues ran

some very interesting experiments in the context of US Congressional and Senate elections (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). Their reasoning was the following: Given that physical appearance is probably the most rapidly available (and probably first) information about candidates, and given our innate propensity to rely on our initial impressions to form judgments, could it be that judgments we make about candidates on the basis on their appearance affect electoral outcomes? In other words, do we base one of our most, if not *the most*, important civic decisions, in part, on appearances?

In order to test this proposition, Todorov et al. (2005) presented naïve participants with pairs of faces. Each participant was presented with the faces of the winner and the runner-up of one of the races from the 2000, 2002, and 2004 US congressional or Senate elections. With no other information about the candidates, the participants were asked to rate the candidates on competence and six other traits (i.e., leadership, intelligence, honesty, trustworthiness, likability, and charisma). Lo and behold, Todorov and his colleagues found that individual-level inferences of competences correctly predicted about 70% of the races! Moreover, these inferences of competence also positively correlated with margin of victory (r = .44).[i]

These results were equally valid even when participants were exposed to candidates' faces for only one second! In fact, researchers have found that inference of competence (and of other specific traits) do not change as a function of time constraints—even when participants are exposed to pictures for a little as one tenth of a second (Willis & Todorov, 2006). These results seem quite robust. Indeed, Todorov et al. (2005) found that inference of competence predicted electoral outcomes even when controlling for all of the other trait-based judgments participants had made about the candidates. Actually, inferred competence was the only significant predictor in the model.

The astonishing findings of Todorov et al. (2005) have been replicated in a series of studies (e.g., Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Lawson, Lenz, Baker, & Myers, in press; Poutvaara, Jordahl, & Berggren, 2009; Rule, Ambady, et al., 2010). These studies have generalized the original findings to other cultures and to other age cohorts, and have ruled out some competing explanations (i.e., the effects of babyfacedness, media familiarity, incumbency, and the ability to infer competence from appearance). For instance, it has been argued that the extent to which political candidates' faces share characteristics of a baby's face is what is truly driving the results. Zebrowitz and Montepare (2005) have suggested that if candidates have "a round face, large eyes, small nose, high forehead, and small chin" (Poutvaara, et al., 2009, p. 1132) the less they will be perceived as being competent; thus, it is plausible that babyfacedness can explain the Todorov et al. findings. This alternate explanation has been ruled out by a study conducted by Poutvaara and colleagues (2009). Whereas babyfaced individuals were indeed perceived as less competent, babyfacedness was unrelated to electoral outcomes (or positively related depending on the sample of candidates).

Another plausible explanation regarding the association between judgments based on the appearance of candidates and electoral outcomes has to do with prior exposure to these very candidates through the media (Olivola & Todorov, 2010), even though the participants may not have recognized the candidates. Indeed, the design of the Todorov et al. (2005) study does not rule out the possibility that these results are driven by media familiarity with the politicians. Although participants in the Todorov et al. (2005) were asked whether or not they recognized the face of the politicians they were rating (i.e., judgments based on politicians which participants recognized were excluded from the analyses), it is nevertheless possible that they had been exposed to these faces in the media and that they were simply picking the faces of the politicians who were more recognizable (and thus better known); this bias could be due to availability or

familiarly effects (C. W. Park & Lessig, 1981; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). By virtue of holding office, election winners are more likely to appear in the media; also, having a large budget would guarantee more exposure in the media (and a higher probability of success). Therefore, participants would be more familiar with the faces of election winners and thus, more likely to select them.

Studies conducted in cross-cultural settings rule out this possible "familiarity effect." In these studies, participants from one country were asked to select between faces of politicians who had been running for office in another country (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Lawson, et al., in press; Poutvaara, et al., 2009; Rule, Ambady, et al., 2010; Rule, Freeman, et al., 2010). The design of these studies makes it very unlikely that the participants would have been previously exposed to the faces they were asked to rate. For example, Antonakis and Dalgas (2009) found that inferences of competence (including intelligence and leadership) made by Swiss participants predicted the outcome of French parliamentary elections better than chance—that is, with an accuracy rate of 72% at the individual level—and that inferences of competence correlated significantly with margin of victory; also, participants were college students who rated election outcomes of politicians in another county that occurred while they were in their early teens (thus, it is highly unlikely that the students had been exposed to those politicians). Similarly, Poutvaara and colleagues (Poutvaara, et al., 2009) found that judgments of competence by non-Finnish participants predicted the outcomes of Finnish parliamentary and municipal elections better than chance.

Highlighting further how the leader-distance phenomenon may affect leader outcomes, Two related studies, led by Nicolas Rule, also suggest that the association between judgments from exposure to politicians' faces and election outcomes can be generalized across cultures (Rule, Ambady, et al., 2010; Rule, Freeman, et al., 2010). In a first study, Rule and colleagues

(Rule, Ambady, et al., 2010) asked Japanese and American participants to make judgments about Japanese and American politicians. Participants from both cultures made similar trait inference from the exposure to the politicians' faces; consistent with the Todorov et al. (2005) findings, these traits inferences predicted the actual vote share of the candidates. One difference wasfound, however, between Japanese and American participants. Participants did not rely on the same traits to predict electoral success. In other words, whereas participants from both cultures agreed about what the candidates were like, they did not agree on which of the candidates' characteristics mattered the most. Consequently, participants were able to predict which candidates would win in their own culture but not in the other. Given that Japanese and Americans come from very distinct genes pools with substantially different facial characteristics, this result is not that surprising.

In a second study, Rule and colleagues (Rule, Freeman, et al., 2010) used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to further investigate the findings from this first study. Similarly to the first study (Rule, Ambady, et al., 2010), Japanese and American participants were asked to make voting judgments about political candidates from both cultures; however, this time the researchers used fMRI to examine the neural activity of participants. Interestingly, the researchers found that participants' voting decisions about candidates from both cultures were reflected in the amgydala's response, thus providing some preliminary support to the proposition that there might be a common neural basis underlying electoral choices across cultures.

Making it more difficult to face

The above results are intriguing; however, are they due to a real effect due to evolutionally mechanism that have equipped us to deal with judgment under uncertainty (i.e., at a distance) or is it all an artifact (or a confound) of some other process? We answer this question in the following sections.

It is possible that the effect of competence on election outcomes is confounded with that of familiarity due to incumbency (e.g., Gelman & King, 1990) or other factors (e.g., advertising budget). It is also possible that incumbents looked more competent in the first place; thus incumbency, rather than competence, might explain why participants tend to select the faces of election winners rather than runner-ups. This possibility seems to be ruled out, however, by Antonakis and Dalgas (2009). In this study, the researchers 'stacked the deck' against themselves by only using election races in which the incumbent lost. Therefore, the fact that participants selected the election winner better than chance cannot be explained by an incumbency advantage.

The study by Antonakis and Dalgas (2009) is also novel in another regard and their replication of the Todorov et al. (2005) findings had a twist. Instead of recruiting only adult participants to take part in their study, they also recruited children (n = 681) between the ages of 5 and 13 to take part. After having played a simulation in which they had to sail a boat from Troy to Ithaca, the children were presented with the same pairs of faces from the French parliamentary elections and were asked to choose whom they would rather have as the captain of their boat (*Plato would have had a field day were he alive today!*). The children correctly predicted 71% of the races! Note that, an additional sample of adults (n = 160, mean age 30) also took part in the same game which helped verify that changing the format of the experiment did not introduce a confound. This additional sample of adults also allowed researchers to show that the predictive accuracy of participants did not depend on age. Furthermore, children's predictions regarding the pairs of faces followed the same patterns as did those of the adults (i.e., both children and adults collectively "hit" and "missed" on the same pairs). Note also that Antonakis and Dalgas (2009) controlled for the fixed-effect of pairs of faces.

These intriguing findings also address another potential cofound. If actual competence can be inferred from appearance in distant leader-follower relationships, one could argue that

participants are selecting not only the candidates who appear to be the most competent, but those who actually are; that is, competent individuals have something in their face that signals their competency. After repeated exposure to politicians who have different performance success, voters learn to associate facial competence with actual competence. However, this explanation is problematic, because if voters were able to detect competency, then all elected politicians would be highly competent (which does not appear consistently to be the case). This explanation is also very unlikely given that Antonakis and Dalgas used small children as participants. Children have very little experience regarding leadership and in this regard their behavioral choices are closer to "nature," which suggests that individuals might be hard-wired with face-processing templates (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Slater & Quinn, 2001)

To get an idea of how easy it is to guess the winners, we include sample pairs of faces from the Antonakis-Dalgas (2009) study (see Figure 1). If you would like to test yourself to see whether you can correctly identify the winner in each race, compare your answers with the actual electoral results presented in the endnotes.[ii] Before you do so, keep in mind that the chances of correctly selecting the winner in all fives races is about 3 out of 100 (i.e., 0.5^5).

Insert Figure 1 about here

So where does all this leave us? It seems that in distance situations followers over-rely on facial appearance when deciding how to cast their votes. Does that mean that we are forever doomed to selecting competent-looking but possibly incompetent leaders? Perhaps; however, individuals should be able to show some Bayesian updating as they receive more information on candidates. That is, the initial classification can be corrected, although it is usually not corrected enough (cf. Gilbert, Pelham, & Krull, 1988; E. E. Jones & Harris, 1967); in fact, recent

experimental evidence shows that individuals can sway observers by using effective leader influence tactics (i.e., charisma) beyond face effects. For example, pre- and post-training speeches are ranked differently by observers, beyond the fixed-effects of leaders (Antonakis, Angerfelt, & Liechti, 2010); that is, a person who looks incompetent can still overcome a initial (bad) classification by using effective communication strategies provided of course, that they have the opportunity to demonstrate these strategies.

We will now present a theory, the actuality-ascription theory of leadership (Antonakis, in press), that provides a theoretical framework in which to interpret these findings. We will also present some evidence derived from predictive models of voting behaviour which supports the actuality-ascription theory of leadership.

The Actuality-Ascription Theory of Leadership

Antonakis (in press) recently proposed an actuality-ascription trait theory of leadership to link observable and latent traits in differential ways to leadership outcomes. This theory provides a framework to understand why simple things like candidates' facial appearance predicts electoral outcomes; it also explains why, despite this biasing mechanism, other leader traits actually predict performance more accurately (and, ironically, independently of whether leaders were selected on those traits). The actuality-ascription trait theory of leadership proposes two routes to leader legitimization: It distinguishes between: (a) traits the leader possesses and which matter for leadership from, (b) those which the leader possesses and which are thought to matter for leadership but may not directly matter (though they might matter in an indirect way as in the case of physical height, as we discuss below).

The first route, which is the actuality route, is a longer route. If the leader *actually* possesses traits which are predictive of leader effectiveness, these will positively affect organization outcomes and, to the extent that these outcomes are observable, the leader will be

legitimized and accorded status (i.e., seen as a prototypical leader). The second route, which is the ascription route, can be thought of as a shortcut. This is the route which is likely to prevail in distant situations. It is a more subtle and sinister route, one which may not lead followers and the organization to the desired destination because the leader might not have the traits that are essential for success. This route stems from traits which are *ascribed* (i.e., imputed) to the leader and which are thought to matter for effective leadership because the leader appears to possess them (i.e., which are representative of the leader stereotype, Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974)—whether this is the case or not. That is, because an individual may look competent, they will be ascribed competence (e.g., intelligence) and emerge as a leader, irrespective of whether they are competent or not.

Consequently, whereas the ascribed route will usually lead to leader emergence, it will only lead to leader effectiveness if the leader possesses traits that actually matter for leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, it is also possible that certain traits, which do not objectively matter for leadership (e.g., height), affect both leader and followers indirectly. That is, a leader might be more self-confident and/or treated with greater respect to the extent that they are tall, thus gaining credibility and influence; given these conditions, the leader may well be become more effective, at least by being able to federate followers around a goal (cf. Judge & Cable, 2004). Furthermore, it is important to note that traits that matter (e.g., intelligence) are not necessarily the traits on which leaders are selected for some leadership positions; and, traits on which leaders are selected (e.g., facial appearance) are not necessarily those that matter!

Insert Figure 2 about here

Intelligence is a good example of an important predictor of leader effectiveness (we will discuss this point later); however, it does not always matter for leader emergence—at least, this is what data on US presidents suggests. Note also that as concerns leadership in general a meta-analysis indicated that although objectively-measured intelligence correlated with objectively measured effectiveness (.35), it only correlated .18 with perceived effectiveness and .25 with perceived emergence (Judge, Colbert, & Ilies, 2004).

Back to US presidents: Imagine you had data on the intelligence of US presidents and on presidential outcomes. If presidents were selected on their intelligence, we would observe range restriction on the measures of presidential intelligence; in other words, there will be very little variance in intelligence because all presidents would be above a certain threshold, for example, above the average IQ of US college graduates, which is approximately 112 - 120 (Longman, Saklofske, & Fung, 2007; Simonton, 2006). Without variance on intelligence, there cannot be any covariance between intelligence and other variables, and thus intelligence will not correlate with other measures. Dean Simonton has extensively studied individual differences of US presidents and the effect of these individual differences on presidential outcomes (e.g., Simonton, 1988, 2002, 2006). Figure 3 presents measures of intellectual brilliance (converted to estimates of general intelligence) and presidential greatness for all US presidents from George Washington to George W. Bush (Simonton, 2002). As it is evident from this figure, there is variance on intelligence and there is a significant correlation between intelligence and presidential greatness; this relationship thus indicating that US presidents have been selected on factors other than intelligence (and a fair number of presidents had an IQ lower than average college graduates!). Important to note is that this relationship is not tainted by common-methods variance issues because the independent and dependent variables are gathered from different sources (see Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, in press).

Insert Figure 3 about here

Two important take-home points to note: (a) US presidents are not selected on intelligence, (b) intelligence matters for leadership effectiveness. If intelligence is so important at the U.S. presidency, just as it is in other performance domains, particularly as job complexity increases (Salgado, Anderson, Moscoso, Bertua, & de Fruyt, 2003; Salgado et al., 2003; Schmidt & Hunter, 1996), why is it then that US presidents are not selected on intelligence? One possible explanation is that differences in intelligence between candidates are not readily observable (e.g., less intelligent presidential candidates may still appear more intelligent than they actually are through carefully-staged appearances). Also, it is possible that voters have a fallacious understanding of the nature of the relationship between presidential intelligence and effectiveness. Highly intelligent candidates are perhaps perceived as aloof, living in a detached world and out of touch with average voters.

In order to understand why the traits on which leaders are selected are not necessarily those that matter, it is important to understand the processes through which (a) traits determine leader emergence, and (b) through which traits followers attribute to leaders.

Some not-so-farfetched ideas on judging leaders

With distance comes reduced information richness. In situations of limited information, individuals are able to make sense of others and of the world at large by using implicit theories (i.e., stereotypes) to "fill in the blanks" and to make rapid and effortless judgments (Fiske, 1995). Concepts (i.e., schemas) are organized around different attributes and the relationships between other concepts and these attributes (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 89). In situations of uncertainty, surprisingly accurate judgments can be made using these schemas (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). Individuals also rely on schemas to classify others and can do so using slivers of information that

are thought to be representative of a given schema. For instance, individuals develop implicit theories of leadership (Lord, et al., 1984) which are triggered by specific attributes of the leadership stereotype or by effects which are considered to be causally related to these attributes. Indicators (i.e., stereotypical proxies) of what naïve observers believe are indicative of leadership are associated with leader effectiveness through repeated observations. These associations may be valid. However, at times, it is possible that individuals perceive what have been labeled "illusory correlations" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), in other words, spurious associations. For instance, being taller, being a man, being handsome, or perhaps being older, may be stereotypical proxies of a leader. However, whether a tall, handsome, older man is an effective leader will depend on factors which are not readily observable such as this person's intelligence and personality.

Inferential and attributional processes

How do individuals ascribe leadership traits to others? In a recent paper, we have proposed that there are two cognitive processes: Attributional and inferential processes (Jacquart & Antonakis, 2010). Although the terms attributions and inferences are often used interchangeably, they refer to distinct psychological mechanisms (Erickson & Krull, 1999). Inferences are concerned with determining the nature of something (i.e., determining the characteristics of a perceived target), while attributions are mechanisms through which the cause of an outcome is sought (i.e., the cause of a perceived effect is determined). One can *infer* the extent to which another individual is aggressive from the an individual's facial structure (Carré, McCormick, & Mondloch, 2009). One can *attribute* organizational performance to effective leadership, even when performance cannot be traced back to the leader (Weber, Camerer, Rottenstreich, & Knez, 2001)—a phenomenon which readily prevails in the business community (C. C. Chen & Meindl, 1991; Rosenzweig, 2007). The ascription route, which we previously

discussed, encompasses both these inferential and attributional processes. The ascription route springs from factors that are often specious and this route which is likely to be preponderant in situations where leader-follower distance is large. Two paradigms of leadership research—the romance of leadership paradigm and the performance cue paradigm—are particularly important in discussing the role of attributions in the leadership process:

1. Scholars from the "romance of leadership school" have proposed that leadership is mostly an attributional process in which observers attempt to make sense of organizational outcomes by attributing them to leadership (see Calder, 1977; Pfeffer, 1977). This perspective therefore suggests that in some situations followers are susceptible to a romantic view of leaders and leadership, a view in which leaders receive unwarranted credit (or blame) for organizational outcomes (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987). The proponents of the romance of leadership were correct to propose that observers causally attribute organizational outcomes to leadership (see, e.g., Weber, et al., 2001); however, they did not consider how this process chiefly matters in distant situations (Antonakis & Cacciatore, 2003). Also, contemporary leadership research has demonstrated that leadership does in fact matter for individual and organizational outcomes (e.g., Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & James, 2002), and hard-line perspectives that suggest that leadership is but a social construction and that it does matter (e.g., Gemmill & Oakley, 1992; Lieberson & O'Connor, 1972; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977) appear to be waning (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004; Day & Antonakis, in press; Lowe & Gardner, 2001).

2. Numerous studies have shown that performance cues (i.e., knowledge of organizational outcomes) influence ratings of leader behaviors and consequently ratings of leadership (e.g., Lord, Binning, Rush, & Thomas, 1978). Weber and colleagues (2001) have argued that the context in which performance cues operate should influence the extent to which observers rely on these cues to form judgments. More specifically, the more a leader can be observed directly (i.e.,

in low distance situations), the less observers should rely on performance cues to infer leader behaviors. Antonakis and Cacciatore (2003) specifically tested this proposition using an experimental design. In this study, participants were presented with a vignette description of a leader in which the amount of individuating information about the leader was manipulated (low vs. high) along with a performance cue (good vs. bad). Following the proposition that the effect of performance should be moderated by leader-follower distance, Antonakis and Cacciatore (2003) did indeed find that participants weighted the performance cue heavily in forming judgments about leaders in low information conditions. Conversely, in high information conditions, participants used the individuating information about the leader in the vignette to make their judgments (cf. Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992, p. 17; Heilman, Martell, & Simon, 1988, p. 100; Tosi & Einbender, 1985). These results mirror the existence of both inferential and attributional processes for making judgments about leaders. We will now present predictive models of voting which provide support to the existence of the two latter processes for leader emergence.

Next, we will discuss some of the traits which actually matter for leader outcomes and those which are often thought to matter but do not.

Voting for "far-out" leaders

Economic models of voting suggest that (in situations of high leader-follower distance) individuals rely on attributional mechanisms to evaluate leaders (e.g., Fair, 1978, 2009). The central idea to economic models of voting is that of sociotropic retrospective voting; that is, voters considered the past national economic situation when they decided how to cast their vote. This theoretical approach has similar foundations as the attribution-romance perspectives of leadership. On the basis of their evaluation of the economy, voters decide either to punish or to reward the incumbent party to which they attribute responsibility for the economic situation

(referred to as the reward-punishment hypothesis). Voters vote for the incumbent party if they judge the past national economic situation to be good; alternately, if they judge the economic situation to be bad, they vote for the challenging party (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000).

A prominent example of economic models of voting is Ray C. Fair's presidential voting equation (Fair, 1978, 2009) which predicts the outcome of US presidential elections--and rather well we might add given the parsimony of the model--based solely on incumbency and economic factors. What this model assumes is that voters consider the state of the economy and who has been in office for the past terms (the models also control for the effects both World Wars may have had on US elections).[iii] The latest specification of this model was estimated using data covering all US presidential elections from 1916 to 2004 (Fair, 2009). We computed the data for the 2008 election, and found that Fair's presidential voting equation explained 91% of the variance of the two-party vote-share; this simple model also correctly predicts the winner in 19 of the 24 elections within the sample (Jacquart & Antonakis, 2010)! This result suggests that attributional mechanisms do indeed play an important role for leadership emergence in distant situations.

This model, however, does not account for the inferential processes we described earlier and which we suggested also play an important role in distant situations. For example, voters do not base their decision entirely on the macroeconomic factors and incumbency; they also care how leader-like the candidates are. We extended Fair's presidential voting equations by including individuating information (i.e., charisma) about the candidates, that is, information which voters may rely upon to determine which candidate overlaps more with a prototypical leader.Charisma is an implicit attribute of effective leadership which is endorsed across contexts and across cultures (Den Hartog, House, Hanges, & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1999). Charisma should therefore play an important role when voters determine which candidate is best-suited for office. The literature

on charismatic leadership has mostly focused on understanding outcomes of this influencing process. However, some researchers have also investigated the antecedents of charismatic leadership and particularly the strategies in which leaders engage in order to be attributed with charisma. For instance, Shamir, Arthur, and House (1994) hypothesized that charismatic leaders have an influence over their followers through their rhetoric. Broadly speaking, charismatic leaders differ from their non-charismatic counterparts both in the form (i.e., framing) and content (i.e., substantive statements) of their message.

In order to extend Fair's presidential voting equation in such a way that it would account not only for attributional mechanisms but also for inferential ones, we included a measure of candidates' charisma in the model. If political candidates are indeed more likely to be selected by voters the more they are charismatic (i.e., compared to their opponent) this would give support to the existence of the short-cut route the actuality-ascription theory proposes. Furthermore, this would indicate that voters have developed valid stereotypes of efficient leaders. Indeed, charisma is strongly related to leader outcomes as the results of several meta-analyses show (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). Consistent with the above theorizing, we found that our extended model outperforms the original Fair model. The extended model explains 96% of the variance of the two-party vote share and it correctly predicts the winner in all but one of the 24 elections in the sample period (Jacquart & Antonakis, 2010).

Of course, propositions regarding inferential and attributional mechanisms must consider other theoretical boundaries too (Dubin, 1976). Contextual factors beyond distance may affect which traits lead to leader effectiveness and leader emergence. For instance, national culture may affect the extent to which it is desirable for a leader to exert participative rather than directive leadership behaviors in order to be effective (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). An important contextual moderator should be crisis. Indeed, charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge and

to be seen as effective in situations of crisis (House, 1977; Pillai, 1996). Michelle Bligh and colleagues (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004) have conducted a very interesting study examining how crisis (i.e., the terrorist attacks of 9/11) affected the charismatic rhetoric of George W. Bush. The authors of this study propose that the events which unfolded on September 11, 2001 allowed George W. Bush to engage in more forceful behaviors and focus more on inspirational themes.[iv]

Nice from afar, but far from nice? What *really* matters for leadership

So far, we have discussed what traits matter for the emergence and have suggested certain traits that matter for actual effectiveness. To provide a complete account for actual and ascribed processes we briefly present current empirical evidence, which point out two main predictors of leadership emergence and effectiveness: the include ability (i.e., intelligence) and personality (Antonakis, in press); the former is more associated with ascribed process and the latter with actual process. We will discuss the links between these two domains of traits and leader outcomes. Regarding personality, we will discuss two major conceptualizations of personality, namely, the "Big Five" dimensions of personality and implicit motives. We will then turn the discussion toward those traits that do not seem to matter much for leader outcomes. Finally, we will finish off by discussing the impact of certain physical characteristics on leader outcomes (some of which actually matter for emergence and effectiveness, both directly and indirectly as the ascription-actuality theory suggests).

General intelligence. As suggested previously, top-level leaders (e.g., U.S. presidents) might not be selected for intelligence, though it appears that intelligence matters for leadership effectiveness. The previous discussion, however, was limited in that the intelligence was not directly measured. When measured directly, there is very strong evidence to show that general intelligence is the single most important predictor of work success (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998, 2004). Links between intelligence and effective leadership have been supported in several meta-

analyses. For instance, Lord, de Vader, and Alliger (Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986), who meta-analyzed the studies discussed by Mann (Mann, 1959) in his review of leadership traits, report a correlation of r = .52 (n = 1533) between intelligence and leadership. Judge, Colbert, and Ilies (2004) report a correlation of r = .33 between objective measures of general intelligence and of leader effectiveness. Furthermore, the association between intelligence and job performance becomes stronger as the complexity of the job increases. Correlations between .50 and .59 for US samples (Hunter & Hunter, 1984) and between .51 and .62 for European samples have been reported for low and high complexity jobs, respectively (Salgado, Anderson, Moscoso, Bertua, de Fruyt, et al., 2003). Also, as indicated in Figure 3, the correlation between estimated intelligence of U.S. presidents and job performance is very high (r = .69).

The Big Five dimensions of personality. Currently, the prevailing model of personality is organized around five traits (Goldberg, 1990): openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. It is noteworthy that the Big Five dimensions of personality are generally orthogonal to general intelligence, with the exception of openness which is modestly, albeit significantly, correlated with general intelligence (Goff & Ackerman, 1992) and that consequently, they may be used in combination with intelligence as predictors of leadership outcomes. We will briefly describe these five dimensions and report the meta-analytic correlations between these dimension and leadership emergence and effectiveness as reported by Judge and colleagues (Judge, Ilies, Bono, & Gerhardt, 2002). We report two coefficients, the first is with leader emergence, the second with leader effectiveness (coefficients which are underlined are significant at the alpha .05 level and within an 80% credibility intervals):

1. Openness (r = .24 and .24) includes having many interests, being curious, unconventional, imaginative, aesthetic, and open to emotions. Because leaders are expected to be

visionary and think in novel ways, openness should theoretically be an important predictor of leadership.

2. Conscientiousness (*r* = .33, and .16) includes being deliberative and dependable, being self-confident and self-disciplined, being orderly, and goal-orientated. Conscientiousness is most likely to be desirable for effective leadership.

3. Extraversion (*r* = .33 and .24) revolves around being assertive, active, adventurous, and gregarious. From a theoretical point of view, and given the fact that leadership must federate individuals and demonstrate constancy (i.e., by having a certain level of dominance), this factor is probably the most important personality predictor of leadership.

4. Agreeableness (*r* = .05, .21) includes being frank, compliant, soft-hearted, modest, having compassion, and being trustful of others. Whereas we would expect that leaders should be kind and show empathy, such qualities may make it hard for a leader to confront others or take a firm stand.

5. Neuroticism (*r* = -.24 and -.22) refers to anxiety, displays of anger, depression, self-consciousness, and vulnerability. From a theoretical point of view, it is desirable for leaders to be low on neuroticism.

Of course, given that the personality factors are correlated, it is important to model thir partial predictive effects multivariate model. As reported by Judge et al. (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), the big five predict leadership emergence (multiple R = .53), with the following significant factors (standardized partial betas in parentheses): extraversion (.30), openness (.21), agreeableness (-.14), conscientiousness (.36). However, leadership effectiveness is also predicted rather well (multiple R = . 39), though with a different set of factors: extraversion (.18), openness (.19). It appears that for effectiveness, only extraversion and openness matter; evidently, observers are not impressed with very agreeable individuals (i.e., who might not be forceful or

assertive enough) or those who are conscientious (i.e., who might be too obsessed with achievement and organization, and who might be prone to micromanaging), even though these factors do not appear to matter for effectiveness.

Implicit motives. Although there is no meta-analytic evidence linking implicit motives to leadership, there is a rich body of research around implicit motives which seems to indicate that leader implicit motives significantly affect leader outcomes. It is noteworthy that implicit motives and explicitly measured traits (e.g., Big Five dimensions of personality) are fundamentally different aspects of personality that complement each other (Winter, John, Stewart, Klohnen, & Duncan, 1998). Whereas implicit motives elicit a specific category of behaviors, explicit traits determine how these behaviors will come into play. There are three main implicit motives, expressed as needs, which are thought to affect our behavior: The need for affiliation, achievement, and power (of which the latter is often measured in conjunction with responsibility disposition, a psycho-social orientation which measures one' propensity to use power in a "responsible" way). Existing research linking implicit motives to leadership outcomes suggests that high levels of need for power, with low needs for affiliation and power are predictive of effective leadership (Antonakis & House, 2002; De Hoogh et al., 2005; R.J. House, W.D. Spangler, & J. Woycke, 1991; Spangler & House, 1991; Winter & Carlson, 1988; Winter, et al., 1998), particularly for high-level (distant leaders); however, achievement would seem to engender micromanagement and ineffective delegation (Antonakis & House, 2002; Jacquart, Antonakis, & Ramus, 2008). For low-level (close) leaders it appears that need for achievement is instrumental, given that success also depends on the result of the leader's individual efforts (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982).

Emotional intelligence. Although emotional intelligence has gained wide recognition amongst practitioners, there is, to date, no solid evidence indicating that emotional intelligence

predicts leader outcomes. A recent meta-analysis showed that emotional intelligence correlated weakly with transformational leadership, that is, $r = .11$ (Harms & Credé, 2010a). In this study, these authors did not control for personality or general intelligence. When controlling for these two factors, this correlation becomes null (Harms & Credé, 2010b)—see also Antonakis (2009). Readers interested in hearing the arguments of proponents and opponents of emotional intelligence in leadership research can turn to a series of letters published in *The Leadership Quarterly* on this topic (Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009). This construct has also been linked to distance (Antonakis, 2003, 2004); briefly, if in the unlikely event that emotional intelligence mattered for leader outcomes, emotional intelligence would probably work only from close situations given that leaders would have the necessary social contact to react to followers emotional states. However, at a distance, leaders cannot be overly "bogged-down" by the emotional states of others and at times would need to take difficult decisions (which would be incompatible with being too emotionally intelligent).

Self-monitoring. A meta-analysis has shown that self-monitoring—measuring the extent to which individuals monitor their behavior in public (Snyder, 1979)—is positively associated with leader emergence with correlations varying between $r = .15$ and $r = .27$ depending on which criterion was employed (Day, Schleicher, Unckless, & Hiller, 2002). However, the exact unique contribution of this factor beyond the Big Five is unclear. Also—and in linking this factor to leader distance—Day et al. noted that self-monitoring might not predict leader outcomes for top-level leaders because high self monitors "may be less likely than low self-monitors to adopt firm strategic positions or communicate a consistent vision on key issues" (p. 398).

Physical characteristics: height, sex, and age. As we discussed earlier, in distant situations individuals are prone to rely on specious factors to make judgments about leaders. The physical characteristics of leaders form readily-available information that affects leadership

emergence even though it may not (directly) matter for leadership effectiveness. Among the physical characteristics which affect leader outcomes are height, sex, and age. Indeed, Judge and Cable (2004) report significant meta-analytic correlations between height and performance (r = .18), height and income (r = .24), and height and leader emergence (r = .24). Although height correlates (weakly) with intelligence (Sundet, Tambs, Harris, Magnus, & Torjussen, 2005), which could indicate that taller leaders are actually smarter (due to a common genetic cause), it is more probable that the above meta-analytic correlations illustrate how the ascription route can lead back to the actuality route. Indeed, because taller individuals have a higher status, this probably affects their esteem (the correlation between esteem and height is .41), which thus makes taller leaders feel more efficacious and ultimately they become better leaders (possibly too because followers may believe that taller leaders are more self-efficacious, and may thus provide more currency and support for taller leaders).

Sex also affects leader outcomes. Indeed, leadership is stereotypically defined by masculine attributes which has a doubly binding effect on women seeking leadership roles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Indeed, if women behave as women (i.e., they do not act agentic) they will be perceived as not possessing the attributes of a leader, and if women behave as men to match the leader prototype, they are perceived as displaying gender incongruent behaviors and are thus disliked. Research also shows that in distance situations (i.e., where information uncertainty is high) women are evaluated in stereotypical ways; however, as more individuating information is provided to the observer, ratings of observers become more accurate (Heilman & Haynes, 2005).

Finally, age also affects leader outcomes. Indeed, age is a good proxy for experience (Antonakis, in press). However, the implicit and often fallacious assumption is that individuals learn from their experience and thus that older individuals are more competent (given that age

does indeed correlate with managerial experience, r = .53, Ostroff, Atwater, & Feinberg, 2004). Existing empirical evidence actually points toward a *negative* relationship between experience and leader effectiveness (Fiedler, 1970; Ostroff, et al., 2004)! It is actually very difficult to learn in performance environments that do not provide direct and immediate feedback (Summers, Williamson, & Read, 2004). Thus, where individuating information is lacking, individuals reason by representativeness (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974, by stereotyping) and may select an older person for a leadership position, even though that person might not have the right characteristics to be successful.

Conclusion

We presented a theoretical explanation, as well as reviewed empirical papers, about how distance affects leadership influence processes. We trust that readers found our explanations interesting. One aspect that we did not cover, however, is the following: *why* do observers rely on seemingly "Neanderthal-type" factors to make leadership judgments (e.g., having a proclivity to choose those who are tall, male, older, etc. for leadership roles)? We may have given it away by how we posed the question! We conclude with a very short explanation from evolutionary psychology which may provide some interesting answers to this question. Specifically, we think that the *mismatch hypothesis* provides the best explanation (Van Vugt, 2010; Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008).

Mark van Vugt and colleagues (Van Vugt, 2010; Van Vugt, Johnson, Kaiser, & O'Gorman, 2008) suggest that over millions of years of living in small, egalitarian tribes with our kin, humans genes adapted to the then prevailing form of leadership (Van Vugt, in press). However, humans are now confronted with a mismatch between our evolutionary leadership psychology and what is required by modern leadership. Such a mismatch may come in the form of our preference for characteristics that are readily observable in leaders: that is, leaders are men, who

are taller, who are better looking, and who are older. Apparently, these characteristics were well-adapted for our ancestors, where brawn was needed for survival. Nowadays though, these characteristics are irrelevant for leadership; these traits do not actually (i.e., objectively) matter for leader outcomes, though others, which are not easily observable (e.g., intelligence) do.

As our review of the literature shows, it is highly likely that in the absence of individuating information about potential leaders, individuals choose leaders who have qualities that would have been valuable in ancestral times but do not matter today. Thus, it is imperative that we develop accurate selection systems and processes to ensure that evaluations downplay "outside" characteristics and focus on "inside" characteristics; the stakes are just too high nowadays. Although the stereotypical qualities sought may have had some adaptive function for our ancestors, for example, having domain specific expertise (which would correlate with age), or being physically dominant (which would have correlated with height and strength) they are simply irrelevant today in the vast majority of leadership situations. However, our genes have not yet caught-up with the current milieu. Given the propensity of individuals to still be biased by our genetic baggage, the consequence of the mismatch hypothesis should thus be particularly evident in high distance situations (where observers have very little individuating information about leaders, which could allow them to correct initial classifications).

To conclude, we have explored how distance in leader-follower relationships affects leader outcomes by reviewing current research investigating the links between exposure to politicians' faces and electoral outcomes, among other research. We suggested that in distant situations such as political elections, followers were particularly susceptible to irrelevant markers of leadership that are simply unrelated to leader outcomes. We then explained the actuality-ascription trait theory of leadership, showing the routes stemming from leader traits to leader outcomes, and discussing two processes (i.e., attributional and inferential processes) that bias

observer evaluations of leaders. We also discussed some of the traits that matter and some that do not matter for leadership. Finally, we discussed an evolutionary explanation regarding observer's propensity to rely on seemingly specious factors when selecting leaders. We trust that our "far side" explanations were not too far off!

[i] It is noteworthy that the effect of competence on election outcomes remained significant even when controlling for an array of other factors which could theoretically have been driving the results (i.e., familiarity with, or age and attractiveness of the candidate).

[ii] *Pair n°1*: Stéphane Alaize (left) lost to Jean-Claude Flory (right) in the Ardèche electoral district (No. 3) with 42.77% versus 57.23% of the vote. Of the children who rated this pair, 90% chose Flory. *Pair n°2*: Jean Vila (left) lost to Daniel Mach (right) in the Pyrenees-Orientales electoral district (No. 1) with 44,26% versus 55,74% of the vote. Of the children who rated this pair, 79% chose Mach. *Pair n°3*: Claudine Ledoux (right) lost to Bérangère Poletti (left) in the Ardennes electoral district (No. 1) with 46,02% versus 53,89% of the vote. Of the children who rated this pair, 77% chose Poletti. *Pair n°4*: Jean-Jacques Denis (left) lost to Laurent Hénart (right) in the Meurthe-et-Moselle electoral district (No. 1) with 45.69% versus 54.31% of the vote. Of the children who rated this pair, 77% chose Denis. *Pair n°5*: Nicole Feidt (right) lost to Nadine Morano (left) in the Meurthe-et-Moselle electoral district (No. 5) with 43,74% versus 56,26% of the vote. Of the children who rated this pair, 73% of children chose Morano.

[iii] The model captures the state of the economy using three different measures: (a) the growth rate of real per capita GDP in the first three quarters of the on-term election year (annual rate); (b) the absolute value of the growth rate of the GDP deflator in the first 15 quarters of the administration (annual rate) except for 1920, 1944, and 1948, where the values are zero; and (c) the number of quarters in the first 15 quarters of the administration in which the growth rate of real per capita GDP is greater than 3.2% at an annual rate except for 1920, 1944, and 1948, where the values are zero. The effects of incumbency are captured by considering whether the current president is running again and by accounting for the number of consecutive terms the party in power has been in office up to the present day.

[iv] Bligh and colleagues (Bligh, et al., 2004) do indeed find significant changes in the rhetoric of George W. Bush. We are currently reanalyzing this data to test for the causal effect of 9/11 on the rhetoric of George W. Bush.

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Figure 1

Examples of a Pairs of Faces Used by Antonakis and Dalgas (2009)

Pair n°1


Pair n°2


Pair n°3


Figure 1 *(continued)*

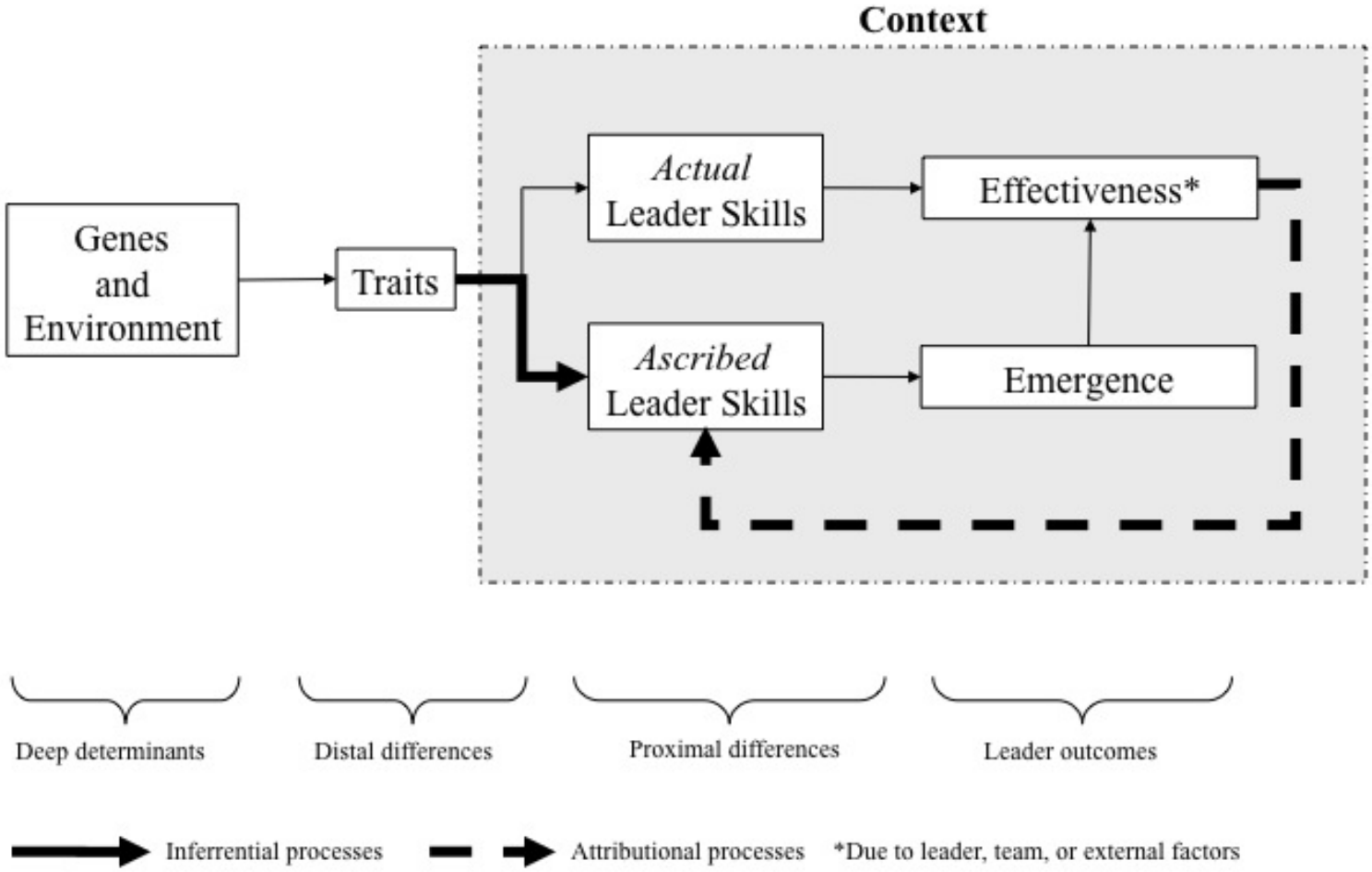
Examples of a Pairs of Faces Used by Antonakis and Dalgas (2009)

Pair n°4

Pair n°5

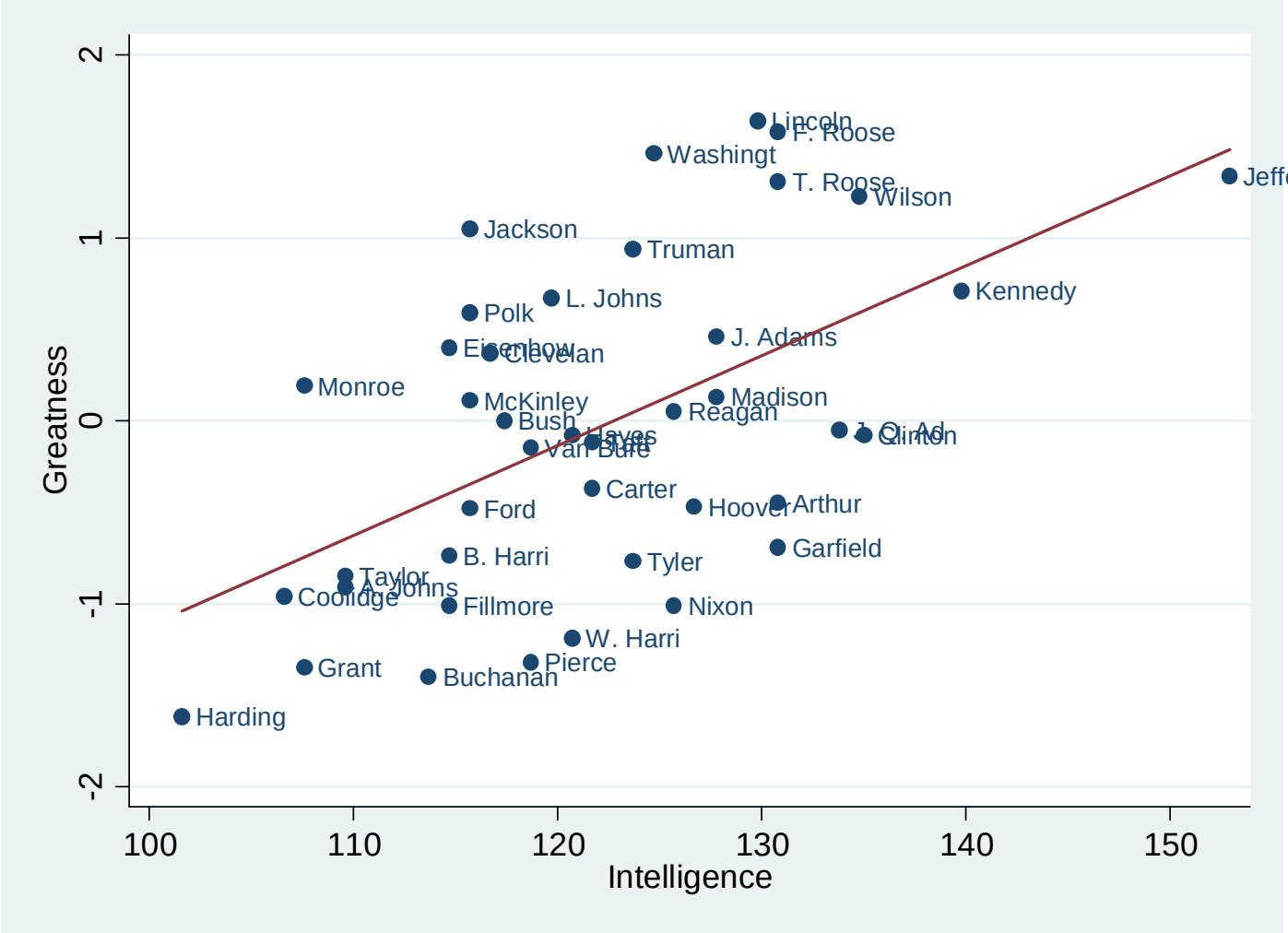
Note: In the variant of the experiment in which the children took part, children were asked to "Imagine that you will now sail from Troy to Ithaca. Who would you choose as the captain of your boat?"

Figure 2
The Actuality-Ascription Trait Theory of Leadership



Adapted from Antonakis (in press).

Figure 3
Correlation Between Intelligence and Greatness Amongst US Presidents



Note: Data is Simonton (2002). $r(41) = .55$, $p = .0002$. When disattenuated for measurement error (i.e., assuming a reliability of about .80) using errors-in-variables regression (Draper & Smith, 1998) the standardized coefficient is .69